

population was checked at the point of diminishing returns. In all these lands the growth of population has reflected the conditions of employment, but whether numerous or scanty, under different systems of rule and with different methods of development, the people remain poor. Economic development has failed to enhance material welfare. 511

The argument for economic development as an instrument of welfare further assumes that economic and social services are necessary for the provision of welfare. We have already seen that this is not the case. Cultivators adopt new crops and new methods of cultivation without the aid of economic services, and the people take to new foods without encouragement from dieticians. One of the outstanding victories over the tsetse fly in Africa was achieved by ordinary natives, under sympathetic leading, but with no expenditure on welfare services.¹ Most of the reforms most urgently needed in social life in most parts of the tropics need no expert knowledge, and could be introduced without any special staff (though a special staff *should*, of course, facilitate and expedite their introduction). Where the people can be induced to want new amenities they will pay for them, as they do for schooling in Uganda and elsewhere. Thus the inability to promote welfare in tropical dependencies cannot be ascribed to the limitation of economic and social services through lack of revenue or of funds from other sources, and we must seek another explanation. 657

3. THE MEASUREMENT OF WELFARE

If we cannot accept the rapid economic progress of tropical dependencies as sufficient evidence of increasing welfare, we must look elsewhere for a yard-stick by which it may be measured. In social science as in physical science, only beginners and amateurs will conduct experiments without trying so far as possible to measure the results. Some of the older dependencies produce masses of statistics purporting to show the population revenue, and trade, and also matters of social interest, such as litigation, crime and the numbers at school or in jail. The statistics, however, are mostly compiled for administrative purposes and have little meaning or interest for outsiders; many figures are of doubtful accuracy and are frequently misleading, full of traps for the unwary (and even for those who compile them and use them in administration). One might expect at least the trade returns to be intelligible to the public, but anyone who has tried to work on them will endorse the comment of Lord Hailey that 'eccentricity, so in-

¹ Hinden, p. 202.

803 interesting in social life, loses its charm when applied to trade statistics'.¹ The revenue statistics often seem designed to furnish the least information at the greatest length. The trade and revenue statistics and the figures for population, so far as they are available, accurate and comprehensible, may throw some light on economic progress; but as an index to welfare they are of little or no value.

In India many attempts have been made to arrive at estimates of welfare by calculating the national income, but in the plural society of the tropics the conception of a national income is invalid because there is no homogeneous nation. For the same reason estimates of welfare based on trade returns are meaningless. It has been suggested that in Africa the value of imports retained for consumption provides a basis for measuring economic conditions.² But, as a criterion of welfare in a plural society, this has no significance. The import of machinery for constructing mills or factories may increase the profits of western enterprise, but it will not raise the prices paid for raw materials to cultivators. Similarly the export figures tell us nothing about the economic progress of the natives unless they show the native contribution to the exports. Trade statistics do throw some light on the relation between economic progress and native welfare because they usually reveal a large export surplus, often attributed to 'invisible imports' but due in part to quasi-monopolist profits of western enterprise for which no services are rendered. In general, however, statistics afford no criterion of welfare in a plural society unless they furnish information separately for each important section of the community.

That is a matter which has received great attention from the Dutch. The inadequacy of the trade and other statistics came to notice in the 'Enquiry into Diminishing Welfare' held at the beginning of the century; subsequent enquiries of the same kind, official and non-official, have stimulated attempts to give a more precise content to the figures. In some matters the statistics for Netherlands India are less complete and less accurate than those for Burma, but they are notable for the endeavour to differentiate racial sections. There are separate figures according to racial status for production by western and native enterprise, for income-tax assessments, for housing, for the ownership of motor cars and even for the use made of the post office. Moreover, in special enquiries, such as that of Meyer-Ranneft and Huender into the pressure of taxation, and in the 'Little Welfare

¹ *African Survey*, p. 1353.

² *Britain and Her Dependencies*, p. 27.

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Enquiry' by Wellenstein, a technique has been developed for turning to the best account such statistics as have any bearing on native welfare.¹

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Lord Hailey has remarked that in Africa the existing statistics might be considerably improved without additional expense, and that a comparatively small expenditure would make them much more useful. That remark applies also to Burma and probably to most other tropical dependencies. Unsatisfactory as the statistics for Netherlands India are in some respects, they do at least serve to illuminate many corners that are left dark elsewhere, and the general neglect to provide means for judging how far the benevolent aspirations expressed in statements of colonial policy bear fruit in practice, naturally affords a handle for critics of colonial administration to suggest that it is more keenly interested in economic progress than in native welfare. It is not enough that material should be available for measuring individual welfare. The analysis of welfare demands a suitable technique for measuring social welfare by presenting accurate and intelligible information regarding debt, civil litigation, crime, health, education and other matters that find no place in individual budgets of income and expenditure. There would still remain imponderable elements, those cultural and religious aspects of social life in the tropics which are the first to suffer from the economic struggle for survival of the cheapest consequent on the impact of the West. But this is no reason for neglecting to carry so far as possible the objective scientific measurement of welfare.

4. THE MACHINERY OF WELFARE

The deficiency of statistical material is a notable defect in the machinery of welfare. But it is not the only, and not the chief, defect. It may seem that no special machinery is necessary, that the care for welfare may be left to the local official charged with the maintenance of order. That is very largely true. Any European official can tell the people that dirt breeds disease, or explain the benefit of vaccination, or advise them to destroy mosquitoes and rats, or bring to their knowledge new and more profitable crops, or suggest new breeds of cattle, or inculcate the advantages of thrift and the danger of getting entangled with money-lenders. None of the most urgent reforms in the daily life of tropical peoples calls for special scientific equipment beyond the stock of knowledge common to educated Europeans. Natives have frequently

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¹ Furnivall, *Economic Journal of India*, 1934, p. 295.